

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER OF WATEREUSE
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June 30, 1998

Mr. Lester Snow
CALFED Bay-Delta Program
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1155
Sacramento CA 95814
Attn: Mr. Rick Breitenbach

**Re: Comments on the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact
Statement/Environmental Impact Report**

"Water is a limited resource in the West, requiring and demanding husbandry and stewardship. But it's more than that. The West needs its sacred places and its appreciation of water as a sacred gift of spirit", Michael Frome, "View from the River", Chronicling the West, 1996

INTRODUCTION

The Northern California Chapter of WaterReuse was formally established in 1994, with these objectives as stated in our by-laws

To promote water recycling as a supplemental source of water and as a means to reduce discharges to waters in Northern California; to work for the adoption of legislation and regulation that maximizes safe use of recycled water; to increase public awareness of water recycling efforts in Northern California.

Membership in our chapter is open to any organization interested in promoting the objectives of the Chapter. We are currently composed of a mix of water agencies, wastewater utilities, regulatory agencies and consultants. Our membership roster is attached to this letter. Many of our member agencies are affected stakeholders within the CALFED Bay-Delta planning process and have submitted comments on the Draft EIS/EIR. This letter, authored by the Chapter, focuses specifically on the Water Use Efficiency element of the Draft EIS/EIR and reflects needs and experiences of our membership.

Membership in the Chapter is free; we work cooperatively to share technology, regulatory compliance techniques and policy implementation strategies. Within the last year we have worked actively to include recycled water customers and the environmental community within the Chapter framework. The cooperative, grass-roots nature of our organization is strengthened when we receive input from the full spectrum of interests affected by recycled water projects.

LESSONS LEARNED

Over the course of the past four years, we have learned several important lessons about water recycling projects.

The first lesson is that a great deal of time, energy and resources have been expended developing successful projects. Our goal as a Chapter has been to bring the agencies that are further along into contact with the agencies that are just beginning project development. This informal give and take moves the entire industry forward and minimizes the need to reinvent the wheel. Unfortunately, at this point in time the technology transfer is still informal and certainly the Chapter is serving to meet only a limited segment of the total need in the industry.

The second lesson is that local projects tend to garner the most support and have fewer implementation hurdles. Industry assistance to already viable grass-roots efforts is the most effective. A case in point is the Bay Area Regional Water Recycling Program (BARWRP). This effort evolved from a plan that looked at exporting recycled water from the San Francisco Bay Area. Throughout the development of a Step 1 Feasibility Study, it became clear that the local community supported local reuse of its resources and most of the study effort has been shifted to more localized, cooperative efforts.

The third lesson is that successful projects require not only technical expertise but also political, environmental and financial sensitivity. Our Chapter has grown from water and wastewater agencies to a much broader constituency precisely because we know we need to bring all the concerns to the table in order to implement projects and provide reliable, long term water supplies.

Our comments grow out of our collective experience.

THE ROLE OF CALFED

We are encouraged by the high value placed on water use efficiency measures, and water recycling, within the proposed CALFED solution. We concur that water use efficiency measures belong as common program elements because they are so fundamentally important that, as a State, we simply cannot afford to not do them. We encourage the CALFED agencies to use their "bully pulpits" and advocate often and with conviction for the importance of efficiency. As local officials, regulators and technical professionals we are acutely aware of the need for consistent communication of the California Water Supply story. Our customers have short memories and a winter like this one tends to erase all memory of the State's long term water supply problems.

The CALFED agencies also have an opportunity to facilitate the long term partnerships that make water recycling effective. Water recycling has many spin-off benefits. We would encourage CALFED to provide some guidance on accounting for these secondary benefits that are often overlooked in classic water supply analyses. For example, urban reuse projects

Mr. Lester Snow
June 30, 1998
Page 3

can provide a sustainable water supply to local industries and a sustainable irrigation water supply. This fosters local jobs, the local economy and valuable open space in urban areas.

Within our chapter, member agencies are utilizing recycled water to irrigate everything from golf courses to premium wine grapes and fodder crops to specialty organic vegetables. Recycled water is plumbed to AUTODESK's corporate offices, the Marin County Civic Center's cooling towers and high tech industries in the Silicon Valley. CALFED can nurture the ag/urban/industry partnerships required to make these projects work by consistently communicating the high value and limited risk of the recycled water supply.

We are encouraged that the CALFED agencies recognize the need to provide financial assistance to water recycling projects. We request that the program commit to subsidizing recycled water development at a higher rate than new water supply development. For example, if Storage and Conveyance projects receive a 25% subsidy, recycled water projects should receive a 30% subsidy.

Despite subsidized water costs, our member agencies have developed successful, pay as you go, recycled water supply projects. They have done so by leveraging water supply benefits, wastewater disposal benefits and community support for recycling. Recent surveys in the San Francisco Bay Area indicate that our customers are willing to pay a premium in order to recycle water beneficially. If CALFED truly wishes to encourage water supply efficiency, it should level the playing field for potable and recycled water projects.

Finally, we believe that the CALFED agencies can remove many of the technical and ministerial implementation hurdles facing project proponents. Our specific requests are outlined below.

SPECIFIC REQUESTS FROM THE PROGRAM

CALFED has assembled all the critical regulatory agencies to effect changes to recycled water policy. While we understand the broad nature of CALFED's mission, as an industry we need specific solutions to specific problems in order to reach the recycled water supply goals set by the CALFED program. We request that the CALFED program address resolutions to the following restrictions on the of "Unrestricted Use Recycled Water".

1. There is no coordination between the State Health Department, the State Water Resources Control Board, the Drinking Water Field Offices and the Regional Water Quality Control Boards and the California Plumbing Standards Commission. This is confusing, expensive and compounds the perception that there is no science behind the rules. Several examples include:

Recycled water discharges to water bodies are prohibited in some jurisdictions. In other jurisdictions, agencies are prohibited from diverted the recycled water out of ephemeral streams and into other forms of beneficial reuse.

Recently proposed (and defeated) policy by the State Water Resources Control Board would have removed recycled water operations from the purvey of licensed water system operators, despite current industry practice that includes both water and wastewater operators. The poor policy proposal required substantial industry effort to overcome.

Department of Health Services Policy does not allow recycled water from park sprinklers to come into contact with picnic tables. Given what unknown substances are likely to come into contact with park picnic tables, this restriction does nothing to protect public health.

Current regulations contained within the Uniform Plumbing Code and the California Plumbing Code (and enforced by the Department of Health Services) require minimum separation of recycled water and potable water pipelines that is equal to or in exceedance of the separation required between raw wastewater and potable water lines. The regulations have been variously interpreted to effect plumbing inside building walls and site piping. Strictly interpreted the code requires at least 20 feet of spacing to run potable water, recycled water and sewer lines into and around buildings. These restrictions have prohibited the connection of at least one dual plumbed building to the recycled water system and present a serious challenge to dual plumbing and increased water use efficiency throughout the State.

Current Department of Health Services policy requires a minimum separation of recycled water and potable water pipelines in the ground on private property that exceeds the minimum separation between potable water and sewer lines as set forth in the Uniform Plumbing Code.

Title 22 of the California Code of Regulations requires the use of coagulant for production of recycled water. There is no minimum amount required and water chemistry differs dramatically throughout the State. This requirement does nothing to protect public health that is not already achieved with the water quality goals outlined in Title 22

In order to address these and other obstacles to increased water use efficiency, we propose that CALFED create an ombudsman position to address the scattered restrictions throughout California government regulation and codes in order to facilitate improvement in project implementation. The ombudsman position would serve to arbitrate, clarify and coordinate the policy decisions throughout the State so that the industry could do a more efficient job of implementing projects and spend less time reinventing the rules across the various jurisdictional lines.

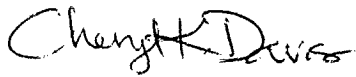
Mr. Lester Snow
June 30, 1998
Page 5

2. Proposed USDA Rules for Organic Farming discourage the use of recycled water. While we understand that there may be some legitimate concerns with biosolids, recycled water usually does not contain measurable amounts of pesticide residue, synthetic organics and other constituents of concern. Our experience is that organic farmers are concerned with sustainable agricultural practices. This concern is a natural match for the sustainable supply offered by the recycled water industry. We strongly encourage the CALFED agencies to demand a clear, scientific evaluation of the use of a sustainable water supply for sustainable farming practices.
3. Current public perception frequently limits project implementation. We request CALFED assistance in conducting, and disseminating the fundamental research necessary to overcome these perceptions. Our member agencies have already developed successful partnerships with the University of California to overcome perception issues at a local level. We encourage the CALFED agencies to step up to the responsibility of funding the research and technology transfer necessary to dispel misinformation at the Statewide level and beyond.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Draft EIS/EIR. Our Chapter remains available to provide the CALFED agencies with case histories, research data and the assembled talents of experienced recycled water managers. We also wish to extend an open invitation to our bi-monthly Chapter meetings.

"The greatest ingenuity is to show that man can survive while leaving some features of the earth to their own devices. This is the true test our mechanical, intellectual and moral skills",
Frome, 1966.

Sincerely,


Cheryl K. Davis
President

- c: Peter MacLaggan, Esq., Executive Officer WaterReuse Association of California
Bay Area Regional Water Recycling Project
Southern California Water Recycling Project